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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MEPP](#) [CH](#) [IS](#) [SY](#) [EG](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: PRC/MEPP: FM YANG EXPOUNDS ON CHINA'S PEACE
PROPOSAL WITH MIDDLE EAST LEADERS

Classified By: Minister Counselor for Political Affairs Aubrey Carlson.
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During a five-day swing through the Middle East, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi laid out China's five-point plan for progress on the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), according to an MFA official. He conveyed to the new Israeli government hopes expressed by Arab leaders that the MEPP show progress as soon as possible. Our MFA contact said the "main problem" was that the new government in Israel had yet to form a clear position on the two-state solution. The MFA official also said that Arab leaders in the region were taking a wait-and-see attitude on possible changes in both U.S. and Israeli policies on the issue. Despite the concerns the Chinese heard from Arab leaders about the new Israeli government, China believed that the MEPP faced a "new opportunity." Beijing also believed that the "Middle East problem" was not just the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but included other issues in the region, and that resolution of the Iran nuclear issue would be conducive to progress in the MEPP. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) MFA West Asia and North Africa Department Director General Song Aiguo briefed PolOff and EU diplomats April 30 on Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi's April 21-26 travel to Israel and the Palestinian territories, Egypt and Syria. Yang met with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Chairman of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas and President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, as well as their respective Foreign Ministers or equivalents and the Secretary-General of the Arab League in Cairo.

China's Vision for a "Fundamental" Solution

¶3. (C) Song said that discussions of the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) dominated the conversations. He reported that FM Yang had articulated China's five-point MEPP plan to the leaders and told them that China believed that a "fundamental" solution was a requirement for peace and security in the region. Song outlined China's five-point proposal as follows:

i. The relevant parties need to hold peace talks under relevant UN resolutions, the land-for-peace deal, and the Arab peace plan, and cannot seek a resolution through force.

ii. The two sides should take positive measures, including implementing fully UNSC resolutions, sustaining the cease-fire, opening Gaza border crossings, allowing humanitarian aid to flow, stopping the construction of new settlements, and stopping attacks on civilians.

iii. China calls for the early establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Harmonious co-existence is the only way forward, and the two states should enjoy "equal rights."

iv. The international community should continue to pay attention to the negative effects of the ongoing conflict on the Palestinian economy and society.

v. Peace negotiations between Israel and Arab countries such as Egypt, Syria and Lebanon should proceed in a "coordinated" way and should seek solutions to unsettled issues such as settlements and security.

Meetings with Arab Leaders

¶4. (C) Song stated that Arab leaders in the region appreciated China's "positive, just and constructive" position on the MEPP. He said that the Egyptians had responded that they would try to promote peace talks and would continue to push for reconciliation of the major factions within the Palestinian leadership. Arab leaders had told FM Yang that they were hopeful about the prospect of U.S. policy "adjustments" in the region, but had expressed concern over the new Israeli government. The Palestinian side reportedly had expressed willingness to carry out political negotiations for the establishment of a Palestinian state and would work toward eliminating internal disputes.

China Sought Clarity from New Israeli Government

¶5. (C) Song said that FM Yang had conveyed to Israel the "strong will" of Arab leaders to show progress in the MEPP as soon as possible. Song said that the Israeli side did not

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"deny the existence" of Palestine but declined to clearly articulate the Israeli position on the two-state solution or the Annapolis process. Song observed that major differences between the two sides on the details of the MEPP were clear, especially on the nature of a future state of Palestine, adding that these differences have increased over time. In China's view, Song said, the "main problem" was that the new government in Israel had yet to form a clear position on the two-state solution.

A New Opportunity for the MEPP?

¶6. (C) Nevertheless, Song claimed, China believed that the MEPP faced a "new opportunity" and the international community should continue to promote peace talks. China, he claimed, was planning for the "next phase" of engagement with the region on the MEPP and would continue to encourage countries in the region to promote peace talks. According to Song, "many parties" had told FM Yang during his visit that there was a need for a 1-2 month "wait-and-see" period to see how U.S. and Israeli policies on the issue developed.

Iran: Nuclear Issue Connected to the MEPP

¶7. (C) The Iranian nuclear issue had come up frequently during FM Yang's meetings, Song claimed. He said that Beijing believed that the "Middle East problem" was not a single problem, that is, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but was connected with other issues in the region. Song reiterated China's position that Iran had a right to nuclear power for civil purposes, but as an NPT member-state it also had obligations and must not develop nuclear weapons. He stressed that Iran should respond to the concerns of the international community. China had been in contact with the Iranian side, Song added, and had urged Tehran to cooperate with the international community through the E3-plus-3. Song said that a resolution to the Iran nuclear issue would be conducive to progress in the MEPP.

COMMENT

18. (C) After cultivating better relations with Israel in recent years with the goal of improving economic ties, particularly in high-tech fields, FM Yang's recent visit may have been partly calculated to demonstrate to Arab leaders that China has not entirely abandoned its historic position of leaning toward the Arab cause in the Middle East conflict.

Despite Beijing's attempt to show strong engagement on the MEPP by putting forward a "comprehensive" solution, the lack of specificity of the plan and China's inability to push it forward meaningfully only serve to illuminate its less-than-leading role in the region.

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